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## **PUBLIC USE OF THE INTERNET**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Ashfield Municipal Library provides access to the Internet to meet the recreational, educational, informational and cultural needs of our diverse community.

### **OBJECTIVE**

To outline the provision of public access to the Internet in keeping with the Library's mission with specific reference to this policy and other conditions that may apply.

### **CHOOSING AND EVALUATING RESOURCES**

To assist our patrons in their searches, links to selected information sources have been provided on the Library's Web Site. Library staff review links regularly but, due to the ever-changing nature of the Internet, cannot guarantee that these links will remain valid. Similarly, the Library cannot be responsible for changes in the content of the sources to which it links, or the content of sources accessed through secondary links. As with printed information, users are encouraged to evaluate the validity of information found electronically. Library staff are available to provide assistance and to help identify appropriate sites. In addition, the Library provides training for members of the public to assist them in using the Internet in a safe, effective and efficient manner.

### **DISCLAIMERS**

- The Internet is a global electronic network of ideas, images, and commentary that may enhance resources already available in the Library. However, the Library cannot control the information available over the Internet and is not responsible for its content. Some sources provide information that is inaccurate, incomplete or dated; some sources may be offensive, disturbing, and/or illegal. Ashfield Municipal Library does not guarantee the authority or accuracy of any information found on the Internet. Users are responsible for verifying the validity and appropriateness of any material found.
- The Library does not guarantee availability of the Internet or any sites at any time. The Library is not responsible for technical difficulties, loss of data resulting from delays, nor deliveries, or service interruptions.
- Ashfield Municipal Library recognises the privacy of the library user and does not monitor the information or sites accessed by clients.

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## **PUBLIC USERS' SECURITY**

Users should be aware that the Internet is not a secure medium and that third parties may be able to obtain information regarding users' activities. However, Ashfield Library will not release information on the use of specific Internet resources by members of the public except as required by law or necessary for the proper operation of the Library.

## **FILTERING**

The Library has implemented software filtering on all of its public Internet computers. The software protects against access to visual depictions of obscenity, child pornography, and, in the case of persons under the age of 18 years, materials that are "harmful to minors". Users should be aware, however, that all currently available filtering software results in a degree of "overblocking" and "underblocking" of certain material that falls surrounding the foregoing categories. The Library has attempted to select the best filtering software while providing Library users with the broadest possible access to information. The Library cannot and does not guarantee that the filtering software will block all obscenity, child pornography, or materials that are harmful to minors. Nor can the Library guarantee that the filtering software will not restrict access to sites that may have legitimate research or other value.

## **ACCESS BY MINORS**

The Library upholds the right of each individual to have access to material. The Library also affirms the right and responsibility of parents and legal guardians to determine and monitor their own children's use of library materials and resources. To assist parents in their responsibility for their children's use of the Internet, the Library provides the following services:

- Filtering software will block many specific sites that may be offensive to some users, but may not block all materials that may be offensive to all users. Parents should inform their children of materials they do not want them to use, and are expected to supervise their children's Internet sessions.
- To address the issue of the safety and security of minors when using electronic communications, the use of chat rooms has been blocked.

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## ETHICS OF INTERNET USE

All users of electronic information resources such as the Internet are expected to use these resources in a responsible manner, consistent with the educational and informational purposes for which they are provided. Use of the Internet workstations is restricted to those who agree **NOT** to:

- **Break applicable Australian or State laws**  
Material on the Internet is protected by copyright, and is subject to licensing agreements for software and other resources. When printing information please refer to and comply with directives given by the author of that material.
- **Alter, destroy or damage equipment, software, or data belonging to the Library**  
Tampering with local or remote computer files, including so-called "hacking", and/or committing legal or ethical violations of acceptable Internet such as distributing unsolicited advertising will result in permanent loss of Internet privileges at the Library. Unlawful activities will be dealt with in an appropriate manner.
- **Send, receive or display text or graphics which may reasonably be construed as obscene**  
As Internet workstations are in view of other patrons and staff, users are not permitted to display any visual images containing nudity, obscenity, or graphic violence. Any violations may result in permanent loss of Internet privileges at the Library. Acceptability of screen displays will be left to the discretion of supervising library staff.
- **Use of Internet workstations for commercial or for profit venture**  
The Library will not administer, support, or allow the use of e-mail accounts or systems. The Library Internet access is intended for research use, and not for use as a device for personal or business communication.

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## **RULES GOVERNING USE**

In order to make the Internet available to as many people as possible and to ensure that it is used in a manner consistent with Library policies, the Library has adopted rules regarding Acceptable Use of Electronic Resources. All users are asked to respect the privacy of other users and not attempt to censor or comment upon what others are viewing. The Library's Rules of Conduct and pertinent state, federal and local laws apply to all Library users.

- The Internet is available for public use during library hours for the purpose of study, reference and research.
- Bookings can be made in advance by contacting the Library.
- Patrons are required to sign an Internet Registration Form and accept this online Internet Usage Policy.
- Persons under the age of 18 must have their Registration Form signed by a parent or guardian. Patrons must have their Membership Card to make a Booking.
- An adult must accompany children under 13 years for all Internet sessions.
- Each patron is allowed 60 minutes of time at the Internet workstation. If no other patrons are waiting, an extension may be obtained.
- E-mail\* and Chat facilities are not available
- Patrons are **NOT** to install their own software programmes on the Library's computers.

The Library reserves the right to take appropriate action to insure compliance with this policy. Violations may result in loss of access. Unlawful activities will be dealt with in an appropriate manner.

## **POLICY SUBJECT TO REVISION**

Ashfield Library affirms its commitment to help patrons use the Internet effectively and is bound by both Commonwealth and State legislation.

The Library will continue to monitor changes and trends in Internet technology that could improve our ability to provide electronic access for library users, and will revise this policy as necessary.

*\*The term "e-mail" refers to mail that is sent or received via email systems such as Microsoft Outlook or Novell Groupwise. Webmail, on the other hand is e-mail that is sent or received directly through the Internet and is permitted.*